

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday- A 2011  
Deacon Pat Hall

[Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21](#)

*Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/nab/073111.shtml>*

The first thing I want to do is to acknowledge Jesus' grief. In remembering the images of miraculous abundance I almost missed the first line: "When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist he withdrew [to be] by himself." Aside from Mary and Joseph, who was closer to Jesus than John? They were cousins and in that society cousins were accounted as brothers. Jesus' ministry was linked to John's. So as we continue to look at Jesus' example for us, let us not forget that Jesus' heart breaks at the death of a loved one. God didn't create us to die. Jesus came that we may live.

But in his sorrow, Jesus was called to serve. He cured the sick and then fed them.

But without us even talking about the spiritual miracle of healing the sick, we are confronted by the very real problem of how to feed over 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish.

This goes to the core of the argument between two different paradigms of how we understand our world. Is ours a world of limited resources to be competed for and won by the survival of the fittest? Or was our world created as a Garden of Eden, with abundance to satisfy all? Competition for my slice of the pie ... or cooperation to make pies for everyone?

An article I read from World Hunger asserts that there is now, today, enough food in the world to feed everyone.<sup>i</sup> The reasons given for why everyone is not being fed include: poverty, harmful economic systems, conflict and, increasingly, the disruptions caused by climate change.

Our "survival of the fittest" attitude has created a human system that cannot endure. At what rising point of poverty will the critical mass be obtained when every "have-not" will take by force from the "haves", when internal conflict world-wide will plunge the earth into a living Hell?

Today, we "haves" seem to be as anxious about our financial security as the "have-nots".

When I was a child in the middle of the previous century, I used to watch a TV show called the "Millionaire". An eccentric millionaire would pick some deserving person to receive his gift of \$1 million dollars. We equated "millionaire" with being rich,

with having everything that one needs.

A couple of weeks ago I heard on National Public Radio that a recent study showed that millionaires do not consider themselves rich, that they are anxious about their economic future and their ability to meet their financial responsibilities. The study included respondents from working class families to the most affluent and found that most people felt that if they only had 20% more money that they would be OK. Again, if you and I only had 20% more than what we have now, we would be free from financial anxiety. Of course that could never be obtained because we would always want 20% more. Can you see how we have all bought into a lie? Where can we find the truth?

[Show the lectionary]

You heard it today.

*All you who are thirsty, come to the water! Come...and eat. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. [Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Jesus shows us how in that deserted place where there is physical scarcity and great need.

Without concern for what they do not have, he accepts what they do have. He is no longer looking to the outside...for more. He has turned his gaze within, to his spiritual resource, to his Father, the first step in spiritual transformation.

Then Jesus performs the second step; he gives thanks for what they have and then with a leap of faith, through the grace of God, he gives it away to the disciples who in turn give it away to others.<sup>ii</sup>

It is given to the satisfaction of all. The very gift is transformed so that all of it could not be consumed by those present. There was an abundance left over. So much so that 12 wicker baskets were filled.

Why 12? Why not 11 or 13? How many apostles were there? How about a wicker basket for each apostle to go forth to feed the world? That was their apostolic mission. That is our apostolic mission, to feed and transform the world through God's grace.

Through God's love, everyone here has received. Everyone here has gift for which to be grateful. Everyone here has something to share through the love of God. It is this ritual of life that we practice in our Eucharistic ritual here.

We bring our gifts to the altar along with our needs. With prayers of thanksgiving they are offered up for God to transform. We are transformed in receiving Eucharistic grace.

You have been given a full wicker basket. I will give you around a half minute of quiet time to reflect on what you have been given and how you can share God's gift.

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<http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>

ii *On Earth As It Is In Heaven*, John Shea p 244